



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **“AMERICA’S LEGISLATORS BACK TO SCHOOL DAY” EARNS HIGH MARKS IN LOUISIANA**

### **OVER 3,100 STUDENTS EXCHANGE IDEAS ABOUT REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY WITH LAWMAKERS**

Louisiana state senators and representatives headed back to class this month, visiting students and teachers in schools across the state as part of “America's Legislators Back to School Day” and everyone agrees the effort definitely made the grade! Fifty-nine state legislators participated in the nationwide civic education program sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

Louisiana legislators exchanged ideas with over 5200 students and teachers about what it is like to serve in the state legislature and how representative democracy really works. Lawmakers also got a chance to see first hand what is going on in their local schools, visiting over 90 different schools in 53 cities across Louisiana.

Teachers, who were kind enough to turn over their classes to lawmakers, are giving the civic education program a gold star and applauding students’ renewed interest in learning more about government and the state legislature after the lawmakers’ visits. The educators especially liked the methods the legislators used to present the material on the students’ level and their efforts to involve students in discussions. Legislators set up mock debates, question and answer sessions and discussions centered around issues of special interest to the students, such as school uniforms, the LEAP test, TOPS and the driving age.

Meanwhile, the state senators and representatives who had the opportunity to interact with the students and teachers and learn more about their local schools, want to learn more. A number of the lawmakers plan to make the classroom visits and civic education discussions a part of their monthly schedules.

“America's Legislators Back to School Day” is a bipartisan program established by the National Conference of State Legislatures last year. It was piloted in six states, and met with overwhelming success. This year the NCSL expanded the program nationwide. State legislators were asked to visit classrooms and discuss the debate, negotiation and compromise that are the basic elements of our representative democracy on or around September 15, 2000. Louisiana state lawmakers who were unable to visit classrooms on or around the official day are planning classroom visits later in the school year.

If you would like to learn more about the “America’s Legislators Back to School Day” project, you can go to the Louisiana State Legislature page on the Internet. The address is <http://www.legis.state.la.us>.